

# “KOLLECTIV”





# DEAR READER

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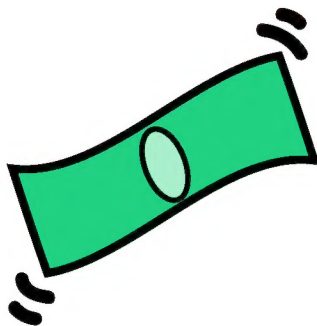
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# THE FAILURES OF THE NAP

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by Alex Robak





Within the radical ideology known as Anarcho-Capitalism, there is only one principle that governs how all humans may live. This principle is known as the Non-Aggression Principle. This rule says that one may do whatever he or she wants, as long it does not violate the rights of any other human who is also subject to the NAP. This is a fairly straightforward principle, and may be applied to almost any other “anarchist” ideology. However, within this principle that is the main force of AnCap ideology, there comes many different interpretations of how this applies, and who it pertains to. There is one factor that I believe is not accurately taken into account when considering the Non-Aggression Principle. This unconsidered factor is the interference of non-humans within human society. It is quite often that we find animal society defiantly seeking to defend itself against human civilization, after all. This leads me to the conclusion that if we are to achieve a truly tribal post-civilized society, we must consider the non-human element as far as the Non-Aggression Principle is concerned.

Firstly, I believe that there is a great discrepancy in between the NAP model for society, and the post-civilized society that we wish to achieve.

The NAP constricts us from utilizing our fellow humans to our advantage. This is something that can be observed among animals and other non-humans in nature time and time again. Tribal societies often used their surroundings to their advantage to ensure their own survival. For example, small clusters of forest were cleared in order to provide shelter for an entire tribe. Another example would be coastal tribes utilizing their fishing resource to provide food to their own kin. However, what these tribal societies took part in is not comparable to the devastating strain put upon the Earth by our massive human population today. In an industrial society, these forests would be completely clear cut to provide space for industrial developments. If the NAP were to extend to non-humans in this instance, then wouldn't the tribal societies be violating the NAP of the natural resources around them in order to provide for one's self? Well, the short answer is no. Tribal societies have always used their surroundings to ensure their survival, as well as non-humans. This is simply a part of nature that can not be denied. Many species in nature will always depend on one another to ensure their own survival.

Many species also compete amongst their own species to ensure that only the strongest genetic traits are passed down to the next generation. This element has come to be known as natural selection. In a society that is ruled by the NAP, natural selection is completely prevented from taking place. This means that human societies will cease to improve over time through competition. This will result in the human species being left in a state where it is never able to improve as a whole, therefore natural selection has little to no control over the growth and competition within human society. It seems that we have provided ourselves a cushion within civilization to shelter our species from the control that natural selection provides. Many people describe this concept as Social Darwinism, the notion that Darwin's natural selection will still continue to apply throughout human society. However, this notion is simply false, seeing as our population has little to no factors preventing it from growing exponentially since the dawn of civilization. It is civilization that has provided us a shelter from inherent factors that come together to form natural selection.

We continue to expand this ever-growing shelter every day through medications, vaccines and modern medicine that prevent us from being subject to natural selection. After all, if it weren't for vaccines, many of us humans would die at a very young age. Many people somehow see this as a bad thing, but I simply can not see that line of logic. A lack of modern medicine provides humanity with a controlling factor that prevents the population from growing to a point where it can no longer sustain itself. Even if many of us would not live beyond the age of 40, why shouldn't we? The average lifespan among animals hovers at around 40 years. We are animals after all.

Tribal societies did not apply a concept that is reminiscent of the NAP within their own societies. Would you like to know why? Because it is completely unnatural to provide an artificial framework for which a society must live by. It is illogical that we provide ourselves a principle within human society that prevents controlling factors of nature from affecting us. We are not exempt from the laws of nature. We are animals who must be subject to natural selection to ensure the survival of our species and the planet.

However, I believe that it may be too late at this point to completely scrap our societal framework in favor of a tribal one. This planet could not sustain 7.5 billion people living in hunter-gatherer society, nor can it sustain 7.5 billion people living in industrial society. Human tribal societies did not employ anything similar to the NAP, and they were able to survive for approximately 188,000 years. This is in contrast to our civilized society that has created a societal framework that prevents control, only excess. These societies have only existed for the last 12,000 years, and will not exist for much longer.

So, should the NAP be modified to accommodate for the non-human element? My final answer is no. I believe that the NAP is a failed system of governance that will never provide an adequate societal framework to replace the existing one. This is not to say that our existing systems of governance are adequate in the least. Neither the NAP nor the existing ones are sustainable systems for the future of our species. I now conclude that all societal systems in which we constrict and shelter ourselves from the laws of nature are completely inferior to tribal societies. Both of these “solutions” must be destroyed at all costs in favor of a society that is subject to natural factors. ●



# ANARCHIST UTOPIA?

a case study of Rojava and its revolution



by Ario Dansio

# Abstract

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Due to the uniqueness of the events within Syria which has allowed for the creation of a free Anarchist system it is important to analyse the current Anarchist experiment which is flourishing in Western Kurdistan or Rojava. The outbreak of the Syrian Civil war and the Collapse of Bashar al-Assad's Ba'athist regime has created a perfect environment for the People's Protection Units (YPG) to protect ethnic Kurds within the area. This dissertation will seek to examine the coming about of Democratic Confederalism as well as Communalism and how they are influenced by Anarchist and Libertarian schools of thought within the region. It will be vital to look deeply within the nature of Rojava and examine its ideals as well as how political models are applicable and whether or not they fit within Anarchist school of thought's perception of a utopian society. The research methods which are going to be used to answer these questions will be online sources as well as literature and current news articles which will be taken into account regarding the current situation in Rojava. Due to the level of recency of the situation happening within Rojava, the use of academic will be quite limited as not much academic information has been published.

However, heavy use of anarchist theories both classical and contemporary will be implemented when looking at whether or not Rojava is indeed an Anarchist utopia. What will be looked at first is a brief history of Rojava, I will be looking into the Kurdish question as well as geopolitical tensions and regional power struggles, western involvement, the background of the Peoples Protection Units (YPG), the Kurdish Supreme Committee and the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (YPD) and Kurdish feminism. Once the history has been established, a brief outlook on Anarchism will be covered, the two major branches (Collective Anarchism and Individual anarchism) their beliefs on how societies are meant to work, what's going on in Rojava and whether or not these anarchist theories are applicable and how much they are fulfilled. ●



# Introduction

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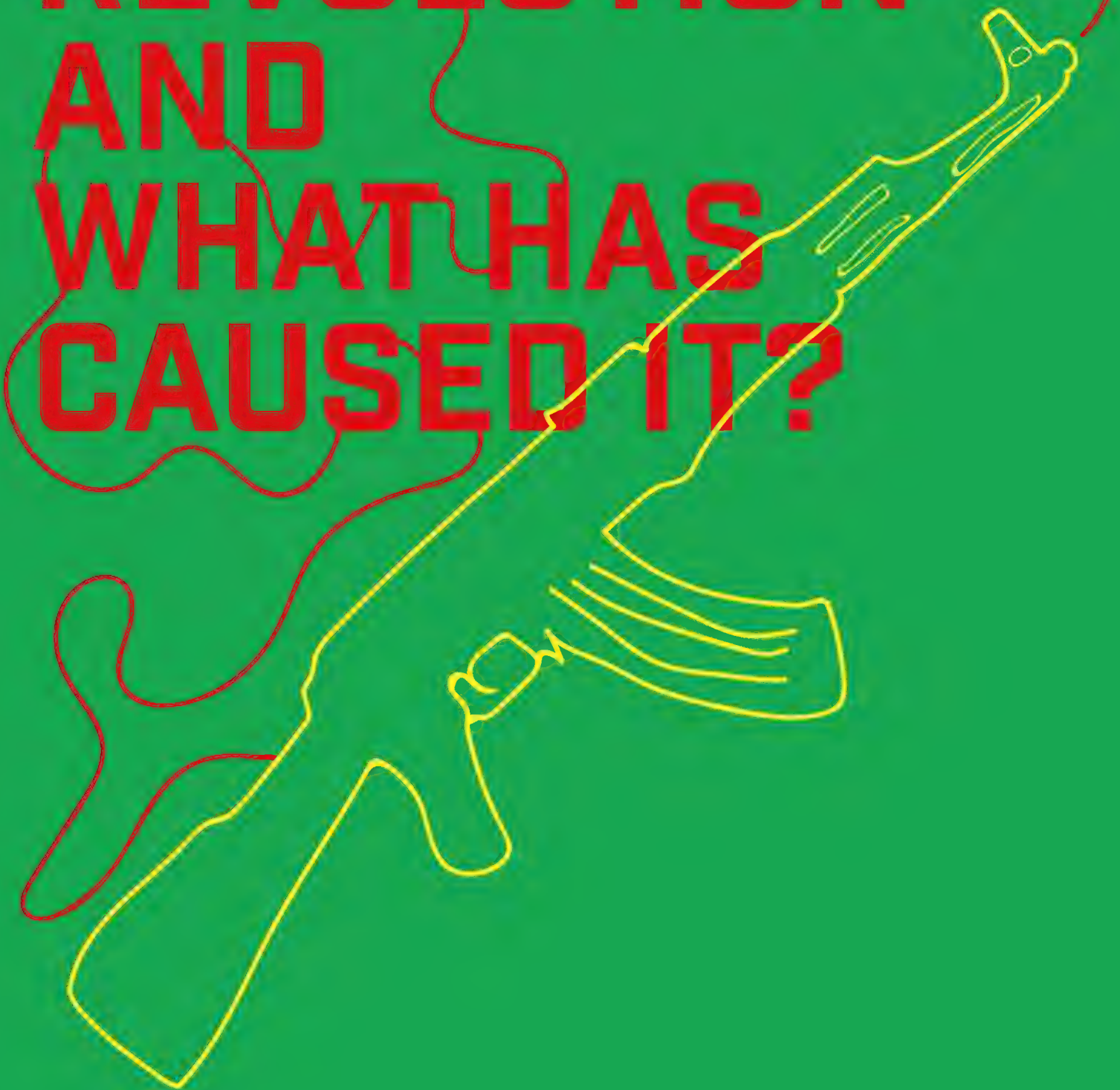


This dissertation seeks to answer the question of whether or not the revolution in Rojava and all its cantons has indeed led to the creation of an Anarchist utopia. To answer these questions we must first look into the history of the region, geopolitical struggles, the formation of various Kurdish movements, the history behind them and what has led to the creation of this autonomous region in North Western Syria. Rojava is taken from the Kurdish language and literally translates in to 'The West'. Other names include, Western Kurdistan, Syrian Kurdistan and of course “Rojavayê Kurdistanê” in Kurdish.

Rojava is situated in the north western part of Syria on the border of Turkey and to the east it borders Kurdish Iraq. Rojava is made up of three cantons, from west to east Afrin, Kobani and Jazir. Various offensive clashes between the YPJ, Daesh and al-Nusra Front, most notably the siege of Kobani (13th September 2014- 15th March 2015), Western al-Hasakah Offensive (6th May- 31st May-2015), Tell Abyad Offensive (31st May-10th July 2015) have led to increased controlled territory by Kurdish forces. ●



# WHAT IS THE ROJAVA REVOLUTION AND WHAT HAS CAUSED IT?



Syria is a land filled with ethnic minorities from Alawi Muslims (2.1 million 11% of population) to Kurds (2-2.5 million 10- 15% of population) to Iraqi refugees (1.5-2 million 7.8-10.4% of population) to various Christian groups making up 1.9 million or 10% of the total population not to mention many more minority groups. Repression of these various minority groups has been implemented by the French with the creation of Syria which in Ottoman times was known as Bilad al-Sham which incorporated modern day Syria, Palestine, all its occupied territories and Lebanon. At the end of the Great War the French mandate of 1920 split Syria into four distinct territories. The cities of Aleppo and Damascus became two separate entities, The North Western Nusayri mountains where reserved for the Alawis and Jabal Druze was given to the Durze community. These territories where united in 1936 by the French due to pressure from growing Arab nationalism. Among minority groups such as the Durze and Alawis there was a division of beliefs between older generations and those of a less rich working class background wishing for minority separatism and those who were more newly educated which envisioned their futures in a more encompassing nationalist discourse.

Kurdish and other ethnic minorities have been under repression since the creation of the Syrian state by the French at the end of the First World War. This level of repression has been so systematic and institutionalized that the Syrian Arab Republic as the official government of Syria was known, never officially acknowledged or recognized the official existence of the Kurds or their population within Syria, a trend common across the region. The level of state suppression reached its climax in 1962 when 120,000 Syrian Kurds had their citizenship revoked. The teaching of the Kurdish language, their history and their culture was also rendered illegal. Rendering a large community of Kurds stateless, disenfranchised and stripped of their identity, Similar to Ataturk's assimilation of Kurds by force into the Turkish state with an identity of being Turk being overtly instilled on the Kurdish minority and the Kurd's "Very identity being denied." The Syrian state has tried to resolve the issue in 2011 by allocating all Kurds citizenship but reportedly out of the 150,000 stateless Kurds only 6,000 have been granted citizenship and a ban on the teaching of the Kurdish language, history and culture was still implemented.



The Rojava revolution is a political turmoil, social revolution and conflict which has been on-going since the 19th of July 2012 until this day. The revolution came about due to political discontent during the Syrian civil war in northern Syria. Various coalitions built up primarily of Kurdish, Arabic, Turkmen and Syriac forces sought out to create a de facto autonomous region and to write up the Constitution of Rojava while militia and guerrilla forces defended its boundaries and borders. What makes the Rojava revolution so unique and striking is the renowned implementations and use of the roles of women within the battlefield. The implementation of a new political system, completely disconnected from Bashar al-Assad's Ba'athist regime and Daesh (ISIS) Islamist Caliphate has been implemented with governance under a form of grass-roots direct democracy under the name of Democratic Confederalism. Basically Rojava, in the middle of a civil war fought between religious fanaticism, autocratic oppression and those fighting for the freedom to choose their head of state, has sprung up in a region not best known for the equality of sexes, or in a region known for adhering to the basic needs of human rights as an anti-state, anti-capitalist, feminist, all-inclusive sphere under the name of democratic confederalism. ●





# **DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM**

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**A**bdullah Öcalan, founder of the Kurdistan Workers' Party or the PKK (considered a terrorist organisation by the European Union, NATO and the United States of America) originally came up with the concept of democratic confederalism during his imprisonment in 1999 after completely moving past the political agenda of Marxist Leninism. This reform in the beliefs of Abdullah Öcalan and their implementation within the PKK where due to influences that the renowned American Anarchist and libertarian socialist Murray Bookchin had during his correspondence with Abdullah Öcalan . He compares democratic confederalism to a form of libertarian socialism quoting that “Democratic confederalism is open towards other political groups and factions. It is flexible, multi-cultural, anti-monopolistic, and consensus-oriented.” Democratic confederalism is characterised by being a democracy not within the state but without one. Or as Abdullah Öcalan has put it “rule or administration can be called a non-state political administration or a democracy without a state”. A critique within democratic confederalism is that the state and how it inherently is founded on the concept of power.

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This new system of self-governance defers from Weber's classical definition of the state and it's monopolization of the use of force with one institution and one governing body. This is due to the concept of the mass decentralization of power represented in small communal “cantons”. While these cantons refer to a body, each is a de facto autonomous region which within the use of down up voluntary democratic processes attempting to limit the power of a centralized governing body, due to levels of flexible, multi-cultural, anti-monopolistic, and consensus-oriented stance. Subsequently this not only undermines the Weberian concept of the state but also replaces it with a completely different anti state approach.

With this decentralization of power and voluntary direct democratic approach the power directly falls to the individual within the community and the council. Since the concept of democratic confederalism is so decentralized the only way in which it can work is through democratic purposes through direct or down up democracy removes the entity of the state and creates an environment in which the individual is key to the decision making process. Effectively taking power breaking it down and giving it to the individual so that each person has just as much political power as another. This concept clearly ties into the teaching of Errico Malatesta, an anarchist author who in his works such as 'Anarchy' (1891) writes, “expressions as “Abolition of the State,” or “Society without the State,” agree perfectly with the conception which anarchists wish to express of the destruction of every political institution based on authority, and of the constitution of a free and equal society, based upon harmony of interests, and the voluntary contribution of all to the satisfaction of social needs. Other prominent classical Anarchist theorists such as Mikhail Bakunin said, *“The modern State is by its very nature a military State; and every military State must of necessity become a conquering, invasive State;*

*to survive it must conquer or be conquered, for the simple reason that accumulated military power will suffocate if it does not find an outlet. Therefore the modern State must strive to be a huge and powerful State: this is the indispensable precondition for its survival.*” -'Statism and Anarchy' (1873) and Peter Kropotkin said, *“In the domain of economy, coercion has led us to industrial servitude; in the domain of politics — to the State, that is to say, to the destruction of all ties that formerly existed among citizens, and to the nation becoming nothing but an incoherent mass of obedient subjects of a central authority.”* -'Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal' (1896) While briefly touching upon anarchist theory, I will be coming back to this and how it relates to democratic confederalism and in the greater picture to Rojava later on. For now we will be focusing more on the afore mentioned topic of democratic confederalism. The main principle of democratic confederalism has been covered however there are many other aspects of this political theory which render it completely different to any other form of governance which is currently implemented. Abdullah Öcalan places an emphasis on the flexibility of this political model to be inclusive and flexible to other factions and political groups be it a vertical or horizontal model. ●



# ON THE DIVERSITY OF THE POLITICAL AGENDA AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

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*Because of the contradictory nature of the society, there is a necessity for political groups that have both vertical and horizontal formations with the central, regional, and local groups being balanced in this way. Only each one of these spheres, for themselves, are capable in dealing with the specific situation and thus develop the appropriate solutions for the far-reaching social problems. It is one's natural right to have the ability to express cultural, ethnic, or national identity with a political association's help. However, this right requires the presence of a well-functioning ethical and political society. No matter if it is a nation-state, republic, or a democracy- democratic confederalism will be accepting and open to compromises in the concerns of government and/or state traditions. Equal coexistence is allowed.*





# ON THE HISTORICAL ACCUMULATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIETAL HISTORY

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*Democratic confederalism relies on the experiences of a society through a historical point of view with taking into account its collective heritage. By accumulating historical experiences it differentiates itself from modern random political systems and in effect becomes intrinsic to society rather than a completely objective system. While the system as we know perpetually gravitates towards centralism to benefit those who monopolise power, the complete opposite is true for democratic confederalism. Society and its inhabitants become central to the political focus rather than the monopolies, again drifting further away from Webber's definition of the state and the monopolisation of power. This diverse societal structure contests any form of centralism.*

*In all forms of recorded and spoken accounts passed down in human history, people have always come together in groups whether it be in clans or other forms of communities with federal tendencies. This form of power distribution has allowed for the preservation of internal autonomy. Even the internal working parts of empires have utilised various methods of self-governance within their branches be it tribal councils, kingdoms, religious authorities or even republics. This leads in the connection that even the most centralist seeming powers often follow a confederate structure in one way or another. From this, one can disseminate that a centralist model is used only in the monopolization of power by few rather than wanted by society as a whole. ●*

# ON POLITICAL AWARENESS AND ETHICALITY



The division of society into classes and categories, is a social construction which is artificially created by capitalist monopolies. *"What counts in a society like that is not what you are but what you appear to be."* - Abdullah Öcalan.

The supposed estrangement of society from itself incites the disengagement of active participation, this phenomenon is known and often referred to as the disenchantment with politics. Nonetheless no matter how one looks at it societies are always intrinsically political and oriented by values. Institutionalised economic, military, political and ideological monopolies are constructs which go against the very essence of society by striving to obtain a surplus of some kind in mass. These institutions do not create values and revolutionary methods cannot create a new society, they can only influence the political sphere within the society.

Abdullah Öcalan already mentioned the link between capitalist modernity and the centralization of the state rendering aspects of the military and political power centres deprived of their influence. He goes on to specify that the modern concept of the nation state, for the most part is "a modern substitute of monarchy" which has abandoned a "weakened and defenceless society" - Abdullah Öcalan. What it is that he is referring to is the notion that public order and legal processes are only favourable for the class rule of the bourgeoisie. All in all power manifests itself only in the centre of the state to become a foundation for all form of administrative models within modern society. This means that the nation state becomes the antithesis of republicanism and democracy. Abdullah Öcalan's vision of "democratic modernity" is an alternative and a stark contrast to the modern world we live in now.





# ON A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM UNDER DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM

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In conflict to the bureaucratic and centralist perceptions of the management and use of power, confederalism aims to pose political self-administrations and self-governance where all strains of society and cultural identity may express concerns or convey ideas in localised meetings, councils and general conventions. This implementation of democracy opens up the political playing field to every one within the societies and allows for the creation of a plethora of political groups which best represent the interest of people. It advances the role of politics in daily life which is a necessity as without an understanding within politics the crisis of the state can never be solved since the very crisis is fuelled by the flames of political ignorance and the lack of participation of some.

Certain key words and phrases such as self-administration or federalism as they exist now must be redefined. Modern connotations with these words representing hierarchy and ruling levels of administration of the nation state must be stripped, instead they should be conceived as the essential tools and steps of socio-political participation and expression. This will allow for the advancement and development of a politically aware and active society. *"We do not need big theories here, what we need is the will to lend expression to the social needs by strengthening the autonomy of the social actors structurally and by creating the conditions for the organization of the society as a whole"*- Abdullah Öcalan.



The modelling of a functioning platform for all forms of political, religious, intellectual and social communities to communicate and express themselves in a direct fashion in all forms of localised decision making practices can also be referred to as participative democracy. The more intense the levels of participation and cooperation the stronger this form of democracy is. As stated earlier with the state being the antithesis of democracy, and indeed denying it, through democratic confederalism the promotion of true democracy is revered and promoted. The powerhouses and the very building blocks of participative democracy are the generally federative units known as social actors. Social actors are known for their ability to associate and combine into various groups and confederations depending on the situation at hand. Each politically entity and unit within participative democracy is intrinsically democratic, meaning that the term referred to as democracy is the implementation of decision making via democratic processes from a local level to complex global level on a platform of perpetual political processes.

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This process will deeply affect society as we know it completely changing the hegemony of the nation state as we know it, changing it from a social construct which is only made tangible through the use of force and ultimately leading to the suppression of freedom.

The point has already been stated that the local level is the level in which the decisions are officially made. However, the thought process that leads to these final decisions necessitates the requirement to be in line with current global issues. It is highly imperative to reach a consensus of awareness to the fact that places even like villages and urban neighbourhoods require confederate structures.

Self-administration needs to be distributed to all areas of society, and all levels of it need to have the ability to be free to participate. ●

## The Five Principles of Democratic Confederationism



Democratic confederalism adheres to five major principles which it seeks to establish and adhere to.

1. The key concept of self-determination which includes the right for people to belong and to have their own state, however strong emphasis is placed on the fact that having a state or belonging to one does not increase the freedom of a people. Inefficiencies occur with organizations which are based on nation-states such as inefficiency within the United Nations. Social development and advancement is slowed and obstructed by social constructs such as the 'state'.

2. Democratic confederalism is a non-state social prototype. It is not under the direct control of a state. However democratic confederalism acts as a form of “*cultural organizational blueprint of a democratic nation*.”- Abdullah Öcalan

3. Democratic confederalism is at its heart a grass roots voluntary system. The policy formulation lies within the grasp of individuals and communities. Organizational levels only exist to serve the coordination and implementation of the will of the communities that send their delegates to the general assemblies.

For limited space of time they are both mouthpiece and executive institutions. However, the basic power of decision rests with the local grass-roots institutions.

4. Within the Middle East democracy cannot be established under a capitalist system and its intrinsic imperialist ways only damage democratic processes. The implementation of a direct democracy is a necessity and the only system in which can handle the vastly diverse ethnic groups, religious affiliations and class differences in the Middle East. It is also a compatible system with traditionally confederate structures within the society.

5. Democratic confederalism in Kurdistan is also an anti-nationalist movement. It aims at realizing the right of self-defense of the peoples by the advancement of democracy in all parts of Kurdistan without questioning the existing political borders. Its goal is not the foundation of a Kurdish nation-state. The movement intends to establish federal structures in Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq that are open for all Kurds and at the same time form an umbrella confederation for all four parts of Kurdistan. ●



# CONCLUSION ON DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM



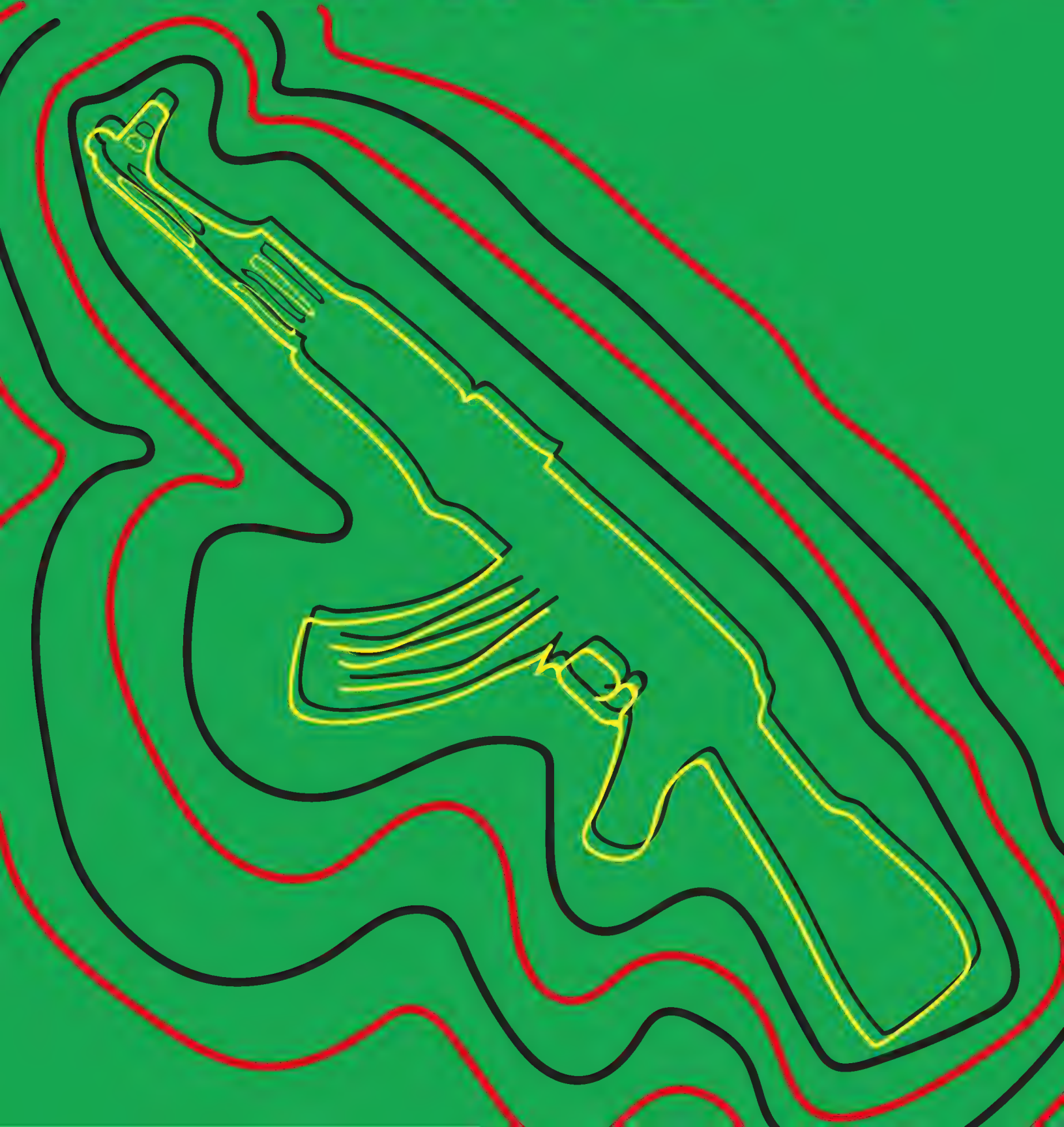
While the classical nation state aims to administrate a society, democratic confederalism in contrast to this can be described as a form of auto-administration or self-administration.

Although rare and under only very specific circumstances, the nation state can co-exist with a self-administered society so long as it does not seek to interfere or intrude on the inner workings of this form of administration. Any form of intervention would necessitate the self-defense of civil society. While democratic confederalism is not passively standing by at any efforts by a state to assimilate it, it is not in direct conflict with the nation state. Revolutionary overthrow of a political system or the creation of a new nation state does not create a form of change which is sustainable in the long run; justice and liberty can only be achieved under a democratic confederate process. This is why neither the complete acceptance nor rejection of the nation state is a

necessity in the effort of a democratic civil society. The dissolution of the nation state a process which is in effect for the long term, as the state can only finally be overcome when the problem solving strengths and capabilities of democratic confederalism in light of social issues. However democratic confederations will utilize self-defense forces at any time when attacked by states and nation states. Finally democratic confederations are not held back by the man made arbitrary borders of nation states and when societies desire so they will become cross border confederations.

Now that Abdullah Öcalan's ideas and concepts of democratic confederalism have been covered and a brief history of Rojava and its revolution have been given, this dissertation will go into greater detail about anarchism, its key concepts, some anarchist theorists and their concepts of a utopia or utopian society. ●

# ANARCHY





**A**narchism, often a word with negative connotations and miss interpreted and miss defined as a state of chaos and a situations of no control with destructive tendencies however this is completely a completely wrong and unjustified idea. Anarchism is both an ideologically and politically valid stance. Before going deeper into anarchist theory it is important to first define anarchism and explore the various branches which stem from it. This dissertation however will mostly focus on collective however a brief mention will be made of individual anarchism and how this differs from the collective. Three main theorists will be focused on, Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin and Errico Malatesta.

First and foremost what is anarchism? Anarchism comes from the Greek term anarkho, “an” meaning “none” and “arkhos” meaning “leader,” or “chief.” Essentially a society which has no ruling elite within it. The Oxford English Dictionary describes it as an “[a]bsence of government and absolute freedom of the individual, regarded as a political ideal.”

So what does this mean? Anarchism is a revolutionary ideology and belief which in its core ideas believes that man can look after man and that no

leader is suited in telling man what is good for him, each individual is both their own god and master. Although anarchist themselves have been around for millennia, the first official birth of anarchism as a political ideology identity and belief system written down on paper happened in the middle of the nineteenth century by a certain political philosopher known as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. This of course sounds nothing like the un-adulterated chaos which anarchism and Anarchy is used in conjunction with and as a synonym for. This is of course because of Anarchism’s inherent anti-capitalist pro collectivist stance, which makes it an unpopular topic with many which prescribe to a pro state capitalist agenda, ergo many of those in power slander the term and try to diminish its validity. It is also important to note because Anarchist ideology calls for the complete restructure of the current system, it is a topic which more often than not is not covered in mainstream education.

Anarchism as an ideology can be quite complex and obscure as there are two main subsections within anarchism and many ‘sub-genres’ within those two categories. There collective anarchism and individual anarchism. Collective and individual anarchism vary vastly and there is strife between the two ideologies and the many lenses they can be interpreted



under. As mentioned earlier anarchy is not a word to be used simultaneously with chaos, however certain branches of anarchism may indeed seem chaotic and without order.

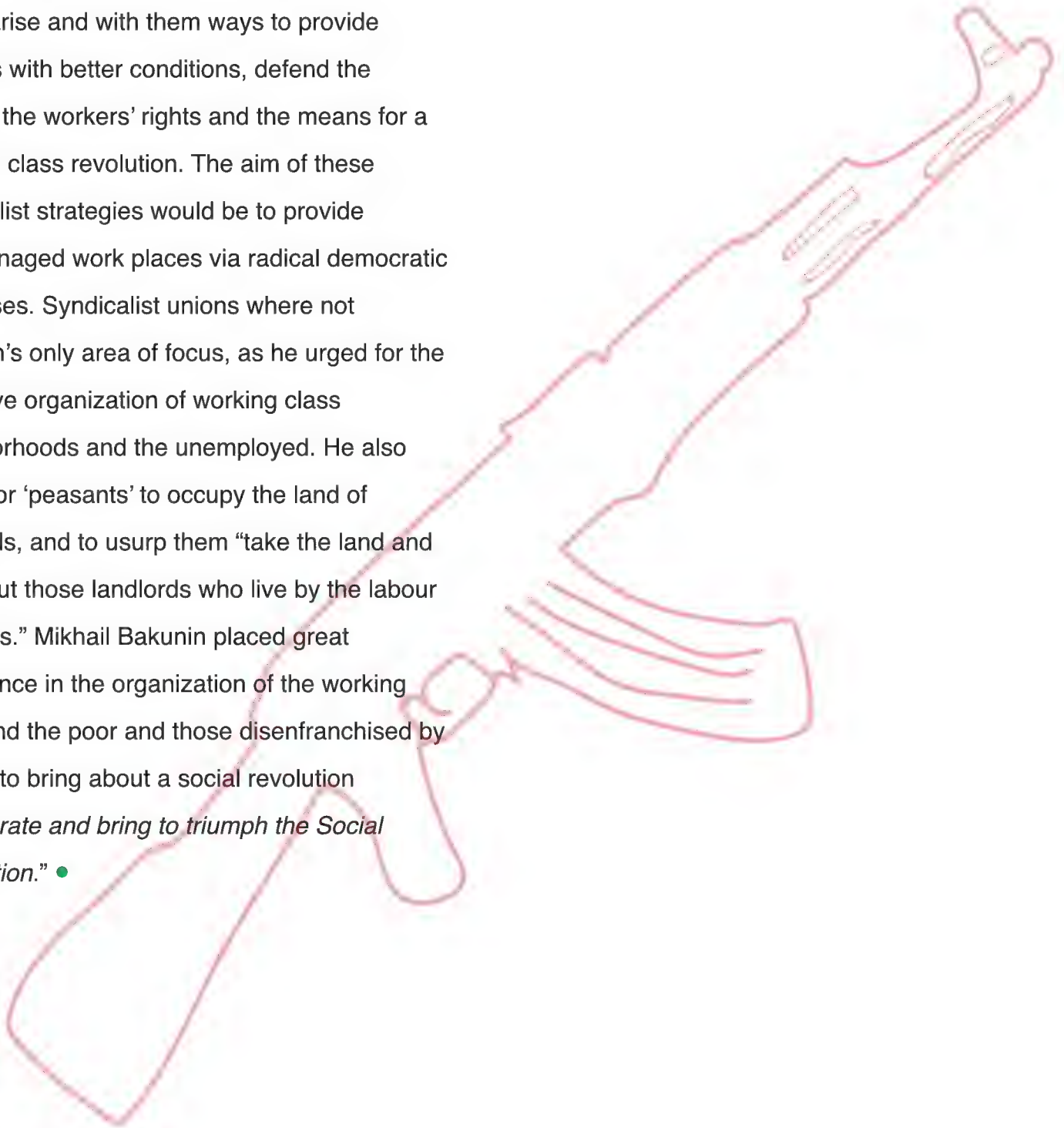
Individualist anarchism or individual anarchism refers to the branch of anarchism which focuses on the individual or the self, free from external agencies such as religious beliefs, political parties, societal norms and other such groups. Individual anarchism focuses a lot more on anarchism in terms of the person where each individual is free to do whatever his or her will is and to not follow arbitrary rules set forth by the society which they inhabit. "*Taking no notice of God, state, or moral rules*" -Max Stirner. This specific practice of anarchism tends to breed a form of 'survival of the fittest' mentality which is in direct contrast to collective anarchist ideologies which favor a collective societal revolution, grass roots direct democracy, the sharing and distribution of resources and a horizontal democratic model. What is meant by a horizontal democratic model is that everyone within a given society has equal power within a democratic process as each other.

Collectivist anarchism or collective anarchism is a revolutionary ideology whose main tenants are for the abolishment of

private ownership of the means of production, the government and the state, in its place it wishes to replace the privatization of production which is privately owned and managed collectively by the proletariat. This anarchist perspective is usually known as one of the more revolutionary based perspectives as it calls the worker to emancipate themselves, rise up, boycott and resist state oppressions, collectivize production of goods and replace money with labour tokens which is determined by the laborers task and can then be used to purchase goods in communal markets. This is the form of Anarchism which Mikhail Bakunin is associated with. Mikhail Bakunin's particular brand of anarchism does not necessarily abolish state capital as payments of labour tokens or labour notes rather than currency is implemented, replaced by a collective storehouse in which workers would take goods "*to each according to his need.*" Bakunin's anarchist principals where primarily influenced by interlinked topics such as socialism, liberty, federalism, materialism and anti-theism, with a strong anti-state anti-hierarchy sentiment.

Michael Bakunin's projection on how to realize an anarchist society is very much based on class struggle to be the basis of social revolution. He called for the working class to unite and to organize in a down up fashion

through the use of localized federal based structures. Bakunin had a strong belief in a syndicalist approach. In which through the unionization of the working class, trade unions would arise and with them ways to provide workers with better conditions, defend the worker, the workers' rights and the means for a working class revolution. The aim of these syndicalist strategies would be to provide self-managed work places via radical democratic processes. Syndicalist unions where not Bakunin's only area of focus, as he urged for the collective organization of working class neighborhoods and the unemployed. He also called for 'peasants' to occupy the land of landlords, and to usurp them "take the land and throw out those landlords who live by the labour of others." Mikhail Bakunin placed great importance in the organization of the working class and the poor and those disenfranchised by society to bring about a social revolution *"inaugurate and bring to triumph the Social Revolution."* ●



# COMPARISON BETWEEN DEMOCRATIC CONFEDERALISM AND ANARCHISM





Now that the foundations for an understanding of democratic confederalism and anarchism (specifically of the collective type) is had a comparison can be made between the two ideologies and determining whether or not Rojava is indeed an anarchist utopia can finally be decided.

As stated throughout this dissertation both democratic confederalism and anarchism are all inclusive ideologies which do not tolerate any form of unequal treatment or monopolisation of power or wealth by a single actor be it the state or a head of state as Mikhail Bakunin stated; *“The modern State is by its very nature a military State; and every military State must of necessity become a conquering, invasive State; to survive it must conquer or be conquered, for the simple reason that accumulated military power will suffocate if it does not find an outlet. Therefore the modern State must strive to be a huge and powerful State: this is the indispensable precondition for its survival.”* -'Statism and Anarchy' (1873) This feeling is resonated by Abdullah Öcalan as he says, *“rule or administration can be called a non-state political administration or a democracy without a state.”* In this aspect anarchism and democratic confederalism share similar goals of the rejection of the state and its arbitrary monopolisation of power with both

ideologies finding fault in a state system and both agreeing that states are the cause for conflict rather than security.

While anarchism for the most part calls for revolution both in education and with violence to overthrow the state and is openly at war with the concept of the state:

*“It is our aspiration and our aim that everyone should become socially conscious and effective; but to achieve this end, it is necessary to provide all with the means of life and for development, and it is therefore necessary to destroy with violence, since one cannot do otherwise, the violence which denies these means to the workers”*-Errico Malatesta. (Malatesta, 1921)

Democratic confederalism takes a slightly different approach. While it does call for a grass roots down up social revolution it is not overtly in contest with the state so long as the state does not infringe itself upon the sovereignty of autonomous regions which spring to life. However both ideologies do call for the demilitarisation of the state on only keeping armed militias for the sake of self-defence should it need it due to other state interference with their affairs.

Both democratic confederalism and anarchism place a large amount of interest in education and the active participation of

individuals in the political platform as this leads to a stronger down up democratic process in which all members of society have an equal say in all aspects of self-governance and their voices are heard. They both also call for the disassembly of classist systems and believe that all members of society are equal with no one person being 'worth' more than another. Cooperation and mutual assistance are key factors in both political ideologies. *"We do not need big theories here, what we need is the will to lend expression to the social needs by strengthening the autonomy of the social actors structurally and by creating the conditions for the organization of the society as a whole"*- Abdullah Öcalan.

There are however some differences between the political ideologies. As mention before the use of violence in revolution is disputed however this is also further disputed and fragmented within anarchism. While the concept of capitalism is disagreed upon by both ideologies democratic confederalism dose have certain aspect of private property and entrepreneurship where as for the most part collectivist forms of anarchism call for the complete abolishment of private property and even the usage of currency to either be replaced by tokens depending on amount of work done or even completely abolished and people taking what they need from a collective

**“We do not need big theories here, what we need is the will to lend expression to the social needs by strengthening the autonomy of the social actors structurally and by creating the conditions for the organization of the society as a whole”**



pool. There are also differences with the feelings towards the state and interactions with them. ●

# IS ROJAVA AN ANARCHIST UTOPIA?

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In conclusion is Rojava an anarchist utopia? Has it been a successful socially orientated experiment? While Rojava and its various cantons adhere to democratic confederalism and its principles it is not unfair to also state that it is well on its way to becoming an anarchist utopia. All members within its society are equal. Sexism between genders has been completely abolished, the freedom to practice ones religion is respected, each individuals thoughts, feelings and concerns are represented and are taken into account as well as power is equally distributed across the communities. Representatives (one man and one woman from each canton) are elected annually to meet with other representatives to bring up local concerns. People's courts are put in place rather than a judge jury session. The means of production are collectivised by workers and there is no head of state. So under certain models of anarchism it could indeed be considered utopian, particularly if looking at it from a collective anarchist lens such as that of Mikhail Bakunin.

However under other anarchist perspectives there is still some ways to go, the ruling under the Supreme Kurdish Committee, while not a head of state or government can be considered by anarcho communists as a distortion of anarchism, the usage of currency

and conscription is also criticised. However it is important to note that the region is still in conflict and it will be paramount to see what happens after the conflict subsides.

Rojava is on its way to becoming a true anarchist utopia however if it will ever achieve this outcome can only be told with time. ●

# Utopians, Marxists, and Labor Under Capital



By Trent B.

The wave of liberal revolutions that swept across Europe following the French Revolution began the process of displacing the domination and restrictions of feudal Europe. However, while this wave of revolutions appeared to promise an emancipatory movement for the common man, it instead supplanted the structure of feudalism, replacing it with a new structure of control. The liberal revolutions, filled with rhetoric of liberation and common rights of man, instead replaced the domination of society by the feudal order with the domination of the bourgeoisie, making formal and political the power they already asserted over the economy, and driving forward the expansion and development that would lead to the rise of the Industrial Revolution throughout Western Europe. It is in reaction to the domination of the Bourgeoisie in political life and the emergence of industrial capitalism that major socialist philosophy and labor novels begin to surface in the West. Amongst the writers and theorists responding to the phenomenon of Bourgeois states and industrial capitalism are the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, Utopian socialists Flora Tristan and Charles Fourier, and foundational figures of Scientific Socialism and Communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, a collection of philosophers and thinkers whose responses to the rise of the

Bourgeoisie and Capital address its major political and moral implications with a variety of theories and solutions.

The industrial revolution, as it developed in the United Kingdom, inspired a generation of authors to pen numerous industrial novels, which delivered indictments of the system of industrial capitalism. Amongst this generation of writers is the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, whose industrial novel *North and South* provides a critical portrait of industrial capitalism. The novel is centered around the character Margaret Hale, daughter of a formerly elite, aristocratic family who is displaced from the tranquility and simplicity of the countryside and transplanted into the bustling industrial city of Milton. In the stark contrast between the agrarian setting of Hellstone, where Margaret previously held residence, and the bleak industrial town of Milton, we see one of the first major criticisms of industrial capitalism made in the novel. In the description of Hellstone, a handful of cottages are described which were “built by squatters fifty or sixty years ago” and “are going to be taken down once the old man who lives in the other is dead.” (Gaskell 25) This image demonstrates one of the major divides between the old feudal society and the new capitalist society seen later in the novel, the

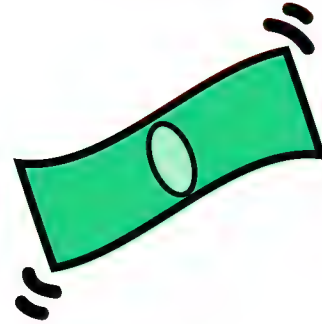


lifestyle of the lower classes and their relationship to land and property. In Hellstone, which is still far behind the wave of industrialization taking hold of England's northern counties, property is still held in relative commons. Without the domination of bourgeois property yet in place, the poorer vagrants and peasant classes are able to maintain some level of connection to the land, and therefore a connection to and ownership of the means for sustaining their lives, which is in opposition to the type of labor performed under industrial capitalism. In fact, Margaret's formerly aristocratic family repeatedly voice distaste for industrial labor, delivering statements such as "I'm sure you don't want me to admire butchers, bakers and candlestick makers." (Gaskell 19) and "Don't call the Milton manufacturers tradesmen, Margaret... they are very different" (Gaskell 67). While these examples may appear to constitute an attack on the laborer himself, they arrive early in the novel and are followed by Margaret's developing an understanding for the people of Milton. Rather than serving to dismiss the merit of wage workers themselves, it appears that Gaskell is using the Hale's complaints about wage labor alongside description of Hellstone to demonstrate the loss of craft and connection to

the land associated with the development of industrial capitalism, an assertion that is supported by Margaret's development throughout the story, and the development of the novel's major setting, the town of Milton.

Gaskell further elaborates the novel's major criticisms of industrial capitalism later into the novel. One major element of this criticism appears as Margaret increasingly challenges Mr. Thornton, one of Milton's chief industrial capitalists. She challenges his insistence on maintaining the mythology of the entrepreneur, claiming that Thornton "considers all who are unsuccessful in raising themselves in the world, from whatever cause, as your enemies." (Gaskell 84) and further challenges his position as an owner by citing both religious and paternal obligations to his workers. This idea, that the owner should, on the principles of religious morality and civic duty, take on a caring and paternal role for his employees appears as the major antidote to the ills of industrial capitalism in the eyes of Margaret Hale. Her challenging Thornton throughout the novel puts Margaret in opposition to the march of capital, and her friendship with workers like Bessy puts her seemingly on the side of industrial proletariat. However, we cannot pretend that this is a

satisfactory answer to the problems presented by the state of affairs under industrial capital. For all of Margaret's romanticism of the countryside, and her horror at the conditions of the workers in Milton, her reaction seems at least a bit flat. In hoping to appeal to the moral sense of the ruling elite: the owners, foremen, bureaucracy and parliament, Margaret, and the sort of reformists in her tradition, tend to perpetuate the domination of the ruling class, making only temporary gains for their cause, if any gains at all are made. Beyond the fact that reformism makes only gradual and impermanent gains, Margaret's ideas on improving industrial capitalism are morally flawed, and come from a place of relative privilege. Gradual reform is luxury of those who are not being directly affected by hazardous conditions and abuses of rights, and insistence on reform over revolution often serves to perpetuate the sufferings of the underclass. Given the dramatic conditions of Milton, it is increasingly clear that while reformists like Margaret and the Chartists campaign for change to no avail, workers are left to suffer; By the time a reformist like Margaret has pulled sufficiently at the heartstrings of the bourgeois class, Bessy has died from the fluff.



Beyond the relative ineffectiveness of asking nicely for your oppressors to play fair, Margaret's ideas of paternal guidance by the owner is inherently conservative and patronizing. The idea that the capitalist should tend to his workers like his flock is a glaringly obvious recall to the role of the ruling elite which Margaret's family descends from. Her argument that Thornton should be a paternal figure for his workers is not a theory moving towards greater liberation, but a restructuring of old hierarchies and ties. It is not a system that produces freedom for the industrial worker, but rather a return to the relationship of a Lord overseeing his Vassals and Serfs with the only major change present being how the Lord derives his power; that is to say in the substitution of capital as right to rule over bloodlines.

However, if the solutions to the abuses of the bourgeois state and industrial capitalism seen in North and South seem wholly too conservative there is also a quite different school of thinking approaching the same issues as Margaret Hale, the Utopian Socialists. Proceeding from the French Revolution and the experiments with

liberal democracy practiced during its course, the Utopian Socialists envisioned a radical new world that in most cases was meant to expand upon the liberatory potential of the Revolution. One such Utopian Socialist was Flora Tristan, one of only a handful of women included in the canon of French radicalism in the 1830s and 1840s. In her essay “The Workers Union”, Tristan presents a challenge to the French state and a model for progression of rights. She begins her essay with a scathing rebuke of the French government and its lack of response to decades of grievances, stating that “justice and humanity imposed the duty of coming to the aid of the working classes by a law permitting the organization of labor (and) that even general interest and security... recommended this measure. But even so, for twenty five years, many eloquent voices have been unable to awaken the solicitude of the Government.” (Tristan 189) While Tristan diagnoses similar issues with the bourgeois state and industrial capitalism that Margaret Hale expresses in Gaskell’s novel, such as the abject suffering of the poor, Tristan advocates a radically different course of action than Ms. Hale does. While Gaskell’s hero believes that appeals should be made to the owners to act as paternal figures, Tristan instead declares “Worker, wait no

longer for the intervention promised to you for twenty-five years. Experience and the facts tell you well enough that the government cannot and does not want to be bothered with your kind.” (Tristan 190) While Tristan’s call for direct action is infinitely more radical than the model of reform in North and South, Tristan’s more specific tactical ideology on how to seize power for the lower classes is somewhere shy of being radical, and in some ways aligns with the views of Margaret Hale. The similarity between the two is present in Tristan’s rejection of violence as a means of seizing political and economic emancipation. Rather than endorse the application of force for political means, Tristan advocates the formation of workers unions in order to organize the working classes into a unified body and exact political advancement through coordinated direct action. However, the call for a union is not the only radical (by her contemporaries’ standards) demand Tristan makes. Not merely a socialist but also a profound feminist, she argues that not only the working classes, but the women of the world had been made into pariahs, outsiders from society and its promises. Her assertion that the revolution of society in the favor of the proletariat must include the emancipation and education of women in



order to foster the growth of the working class as a whole.

Radical in her time, Tristan's ideology represents a major contribution to the theory of proletarian struggle and emancipation. Her call for direct action rather than simple appeals to authority appears immediately as a generally accepted concept in the far left. Tristan states that the change needed for the proletariat cannot come from the state or the government, but rather is the result of collective action. The stem of victory for Tristan is not simply the vote, nor is it parliamentarism. Rather it is the muscle, brains and unification of the proletariat. However, much the same as the reformists like Hale and the Chartists, Tristan diametrically opposes the use of force for political gain. While this position is easy to praise on the grounds of the culturally constructed morality of nonviolence, the question posed in my discussion of Gaskell's novel still stands: is nonviolence in the face of a destructive and fatal system an indication of privilege? On the contrary, does Tristan's opposition to force represent a more liberal sentiment coming from an otherwise radical thinker. While this theory presents a significantly more radical antidote to industrial capitalism than the theory presented by Gaskell, Tristan's most significant theoretical

point, and the one which maintains the most ideological sentiment today is her theory of proletarian feminism, the assertion that the liberation of the working class cannot occur without also liberating and emancipating women who raise, nurture and educate the next generation of working people. In addition to Tristan, Charles Fourier also expands upon the canon of Utopian Socialist philosophy.

Whereas Tristan's radical propositions largely equate to a relatively moderate call for a general union, Charles Fourier advocates a truly radical and utopian social system known as Phalanstery. In his essay "On the Phalanstery" Fourier diagnoses a major contradiction that underpins the bourgeois state. This contradiction is the opposition of the civilized state to natural human passions, and the suppression of these passions open expression. Fourier identifies several passions that are elements of human interaction and expression, however for the purposes of this essay we will be discussing the three distributive passions. These passions, which Fourier asserts originate in the primitive age of mankind and have been branded as vices rather than passions, in spite of their importance in achieving social harmony. The first of these passions is the cabalist passion, which drives

mankind to associate in closed groups to complete mutually beneficial tasks. While cabals are often decried as being secretive, criminal and dangerous to the whole of society, Fourier asserts that cabals form the basis of close and beneficial human relationships, and that interactions within the cabal are admirable in their “terseness, their animation, the quick play of ideas, the alertness of action.” (Fourier 162) Following the cabal passion, Fourier then defines the composite passion, that passion which “requires in every action a composite allurements or pleasure of the senses and of the soul.” (Fourier 162) This passion too has been subverted by the civilized state. Truly, there is little pleasure of the body or fulfillment of the soul on a factory line, a contradiction between internal passion and material conditions that drives Fourier’s major critique. This critique is further sharpened in consideration of the papillonne, or butterfly passion, which drives man crave “periodic variety in the phases of life and frequent variety in our occupations.” (Fourier 163) This passion, too has been subverted by the rise of industry and the bourgeois state. There is no room for variety and intrigue on the factory floor, nor does the division of labor into separate, repeated tasks conducive to the experience of a

fulfilled life. A man who drives rivets into the same spot on units of equipment for 8 hours a day is incapable of fulfilling the demands of the butterfly passion. Beyond its subversion of human passions, Fourier also asserts that the civilized state also reversed natural order surrounding such human and natural endeavors as eating, noting that “in the civilized state, love of eating does not ally itself to industry because the laboring producer does not enjoy the commodities which he has manufactured” a condition which Fourier asserts will be changed under the associative state of the phalanstery, where producers may benefit directly from their labor rather than produce commodities they do not claim any benefit from other than a meager wage. The solution to these ills, according to Fourier, is not an appeal to the morality of the ruling elite, nor is it the foundation of a general union for working men. Rather, Fourier proposes a system of intentional communities which he calls phalansteries, self sustaining, voluntary and cooperative communities that allow for the actuation of the individual’s passions.

As a response to the abuses of industrial capital and the imposition of bourgeois values in opposition to human passions, Fourier’s analysis appears to be both more radical, and more

fundamentally useful than the theories presented by Gaskell and Tristan. While the tactic of liberation through the establishment of phalansteries certainly appears utopian in its vision and scope, an observation reinforced by Fourier's failure to actually establish one in his lifetime, the history of far left revolt and its connections to communes, a term that is mostly synonymous with phalanstery. Surely, Fourier's vision of small, egalitarian voluntary societies has been seen in revolutionary movements around the world. Given the rise of the autonomous commune in Ukraine under Nestor Makhno in the years following the Bolshevik Revolution, in Catalonia under the CNT FAI during the Spanish Civil war, Fourier's thesis on phalansteries appears repeatedly as a revolutionary social structure. With the continued push towards communization in places like the Greek community of Exarchia, the autonomous municipalities under EZLN influence in regions of Chiapas and the urban squats that have been established across France and Germany, Fourier's utopian vision of intentional communities holds precedence still, and asserts itself as a wholly more radical, and more effective strategy for radically recharting social relations. However, Fourier's vision, as effective as

elements of it appear to be, is in many cases articulated in a way that borders on fanaticism. Furthermore, while Fourier studied and referred to Newton in his theory, his work is relatively lacking in a true social science and a controlled, experimental approach to the development of complex theorem later seen in scientific socialism.

Amongst the foundational and most influential of scientific socialists and historical philosophers are Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Both Marx and Engels produced a large body of work on topics ranging from political and social economy to revolutionary structure, and employed scientific inquiry and Newtonian sensibilities about time and progress to formulate the basis for the school of socialist thought known as communism. Their first major work together, "The Communist Manifesto" lays out their major diagnosis of the ills of industrial capitalism, analyzing through the lense of scientific inquiry the forces that drive social and political development throughout history. Their theory behind the forces of history is delivered in the opening lines of part one of "The Communist Manifesto", in which they state "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." (Marx and Engels, Manifesto 7) The



theory that all of history has been driven by the struggle of an underclass against the class in power represents the writer's attempt to make measurable and discernable to seemingly invisible forces behind history. This statement represents the foundations of Marx and Engels' theory of dialectical materialism, the idea that a new society is built by the society before it, and then, capitalizing on the inadequacies and internal contradictions, destroys the old society. Through this theory, the writers are able to explain the rise of capitalism and bourgeois society not as random and spontaneous but as "the product of a long course of development, a series of revolutions in the modes of production and exchange" (Marx and Engels, Manifesto 9). Unlike the utopian socialists and Gaskell, who mostly address the vast abrogations of industrial capitalism against the common man without exploring the root of the system, Marx and Engels set out to explore through scientific inquiry and explain in quantifiable, scientific terms, how industrial capital came to power, and how it spreads. In addressing the bourgeois state, Marx and Engels indicate the massive role of capital, the dead labor accumulated by the bourgeoisie through industrial manufacturing and extraction of surplus value, in influencing the

structures of control. Not only are the bourgeoisie of a nation capable of shaping their own national policy, but the hegemony of capital influences international revolutions in modes of production and structures of control. With Engels assistance and funding, Marx went on to explore not only the process by which the bourgeoisie emerge as the dominant class of society, but develops a scientific analysis of labor and value, expressed in his behemoth economic treatise *Das Kapital*, which outlines the major economic basis of the communist and marxist system, and develops a working theory on the relation between labor and capital. According to Marx's work in *Das Kapital*, the wealth of nations under capitalism appears as "an immense collection of commodities." (Marx, *Das Kapital* 125) Marx defines a commodity as the product of labor that has both a use value and an exchange value. If a good is useless and not desired, it is not a commodity. Furthermore, if a produce manufactures a good to use for his own consumption, this too is not a commodity for it is without an exchange value. Underpinning value, according to Marx, is not merely the factors of the market and of demand, but also the labor cost, measured in labor hours, to produce a commodity. This is referred to as the labor theory of value, a theory central to Marx's

explanation of the rise of capitalism. If the labor put into the production of a commodity is where it derives its worth, then laborers ought to be compensated for the value they alone create, yet they instead have their surplus value taken off of them by their employer, one of the major contradictions of capitalist production. A man may labor 8 hours a day to produce commodity a. In those 8 hours he produces 1000 dollars worth of commodity a (in this equation let us assume that means 1000 dollars exceeding the costs to produce commodity a). However, this worker, who has only his labor-power to sell, only receives a portion of his productive capacity. The rest is taken by the capitalist as profit. When compared to the Utopians and Gaskell, Marx and Engels present a methodical and heavily contemplated analysis of the abrogations of capitalism and bourgeois society against the lower classes. This analysis of course proves to be wildly more influential than that of previous socialist thinkers, and there is clear evidence why. Not only do Marx and Engels present a clear and scientific argument against capital, but they furthermore provide a genuine path forward, one that relies not on an appeal to the moral of the structure of control or the ability to establish independent communities within bourgeois

society, but instead, an overthrow through any means necessary of the forces of inequity and injustice that underscore capitalist society. The wave of liberal revolutions that swept across Europe following the French Revolution brought about a radical restructuring of feudal society. The liberal revolutions, filled with rhetoric of liberation and common rights of man, instead replaced the domination of society by the feudal order with the domination of the bourgeoisie, making formal and political the power they already asserted over the economy, and driving forward the expansion and development that would lead to the rise of the Industrial Revolution throughout Western Europe. It is in reaction to the domination of the Bourgeoisie in political life and the emergence of industrial capitalism that major socialist philosophy and labor novels begin to surface in the West. Amongst the writers and theorists responding to the phenomenon of Bourgeois states and industrial capitalism are the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, Utopian socialists Flora Tristan and Charles Fourier, and foundational figures of Scientific Socialism and Communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, a collection of philosophers and thinkers whose responses to the rise of the Bourgeoisie and Capital address its major political and moral implications with a variety of theories and solutions. ●

# STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

the Unintentional Role of  
Japan in the Rise of  
the Chinese Communist  
Party



By Trent B.



Following the first contact of industrialized European powers with East Asia, the trajectories of China and Japan, once historically connected by shared systems and ideologies such as a shared written language, and shared influence of Buddhism and Confucianism, split off on two radically different trajectories. Japan, their hand forced by Commodore Perry, set out on an aggressive path towards rapid industrialization in order to preserve national autonomy. China, on the other hand, is crippled by repeated invasion and unfair treaties, losing national autonomy, land and economic stability. For Japan, this shift, started by the Meiji government, leads to the growth of a fascist military state, and a violent nationalist movement that propels Japan into military conflict and the Second World War. China, on the other hand, crippled by years of invasion and domestic rebellion, falls into warlord rule, until two political parties, the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-Shek and the Communists, led by Mao Zedong, unite to disband the warlords. However, the two factions soon begin fighting each other, with Chiang Kai-Shek ordering his men to kill the communists. It is during this period of civil war, during the 1930's that Japan invades China, forever changing the course of the civil war in China, and the direction of both nations

thereafter.

For Mao Zedong and the Communists in Shaanxi, the pre WW2 imperialism of the Japanese may in fact have been a godsend. In 1936, Chiang Kai-Shek believed he was within reach of achieving his ultimate goal to kill the communists. However, Japan was on China's doorstep, having claimed huge swathes of Manchuria in order to exploit its anthracite and iron ore. As a result, public opinion in China "was now generally much more alarmed by the growing Japanese menace than by the internal Communist threat" (Holcombe 266). Here, we see evidence that the increasing military dominance of the Japanese in Asia was a driving force behind Chinese action during their years of civil war. It is fair to say that the looming threat of the Japanese, which distracted the Chinese public and garnered military attention, is at least partially responsible for the survival of Mao and his forces in Shaanxi. Then, to add to Chiang Kai-Shek's difficulty in killing the Communists, the chief military commander for the Nationalists in Shaanxi, was "the son of the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin, who had been assassinated by the Japanese in 1928" (Holcombe 276). This becomes a serious conflict of interest, as Shek's chief general in Shaanxi is less interested in the

fight to kill the communists than he is in fighting the Japanese. He is so opposed to the direction that Chiang Kai-Shek is pushing the Nationalists that in December of 1936, “Chiang Kai-Shek was kidnapped by his own troops, forced to negotiate with the Communists, and agree to the formation of a United Front against the Japanese.” (Holcombe 276). Again, we see the looming threat of Japanese invasion dealing the cards in favor of Mao and the Communists, as the animosity towards Japan forces Shek into cooperation in order to defend the country. However, while Japanese aggression certainly shaped the fate of the Communists before the outbreak of WW2 in China, Japanese action became even more influential on Mao’s fate. As the Second World War opened, “it would be the Japanese invasion... that would provide the context for a final Communist Victory” (Holcombe 276). During the invasion of China, the Nationalist army is quickly and decisively defeated in key cities. Their forces scattered and driven continuously of the Yangtze river, the Nationalists lost the “developed modern sector of its economy, which had been almost exclusively confined to the large coastal cities” (Holcombe 268), crippling their ability to regroup and route the Japanese invaders out of China. Meanwhile,

the Communists fought a different type of war against the Japanese invaders, relying on guerilla tactics to engage the larger, better equipped Japanese forces. The Communists, though never possessing more than 400,000 men, were ruthlessly efficient and, “By the end of the war, the communists claimed to have fought 19,000 engagements of varying sizes, during which they inflicted a million casualties (dead, wounded and captured)” (Historynet.com). The victories against the Japanese helped to fuel the rise of the Communists, as volunteers came in more steadily, and the party gained national renown for their defense of China. However, the Communists also gained victor’s spoils for their efforts as “the communists also captured 320,000 rifles, 9,000 machine guns and 900 artillery pieces from the Japanese. These by-products of Japanese defeat would give them a new lease on life in 1946, when hostilities resumed in China’s Third Civil War between Chiang’s (Nationalists) and Mao’s redesignated People’s Liberation Army.” (Historynet.com).

After the Japanese defeat by Allied forces in 1945, China and Japan embark on separate, and dramatically different paths. The defeated Japanese are forced to surrender without condition, and are then subjected to Allied

occupation. Under the watch of General Douglas MacArthur, Japan is occupied by primarily American forces, and helped to recover from the war, with MacArthur “requesting relief supplies of food and medicine, which undoubtedly saved lives” (Holcombe 278). Under U.S. guidance, “Sovereign power was now vested... in “The People.” Japan became a genuine Western-style democracy” (Holcombe 280). The Japanese, with U.S. aid, recover from post war devastation, and go on to form a modern industrial economy, with companies like Toyota, Yamaha, and later countless software firms propelling Japan to become one of the world’s top economies.

While post war conditions set Japan on the road to recovery and westernization, the same cannot be said of China. Despite the Chinese victory in World War Two, conditions in China saw no serious improvement. During the postwar era, “Civil war between the Chinese Nationalists and Communists entered its final phase” (Holcombe 313). As a byproduct of the last days of WW2, the Russians were in control of Manchuria, and “Turned over to the Chinese Communists some three-quarters of a million captured rifles, eighteen thousand machine guns and four thousand pieces of artillery” (Holcombe 314) Now armed to the teeth, Mao and the

Communists were able to launch a military re-unification of China. Events began to quickly unfold once the Communists launched their offensive. By 1949, Beijing was in Communist hands, and “on October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong stood on Tiananmen... and declared the establishment of a new country, called the People’s Republic of China” (Holcombe 314). Under Mao, the Chinese begin to carve out a new national identity, and establish a new government. However, the new government is soon faced with serious shortage and hardship. Mao, in a Quixotic vision of an industrialized China, set out on what was called The Great Leap Forward. Mao began a rapid and misguided communization of the Chinese people, to disastrous results. In trying to produce too much on a national scale, without proper expertise, and without incentive or re-education. The result is that, “Although the Great Leap Forward began in early 1958 amid popular enthusiasm, by fall 1958, serious shortages were already becoming apparent.” (Holcombe 317-318). Violence quickly breaks out in the 1960’s, as a cultural revolution swept across China, purging party members and destabilizing the fledgling nation further. Tensions continue into the 1980’s, in the Tiananmen Square Massacre, in which perhaps thousands of



student demonstrators were killed.

Moving on from a several thousand year history and into the contemporary era, it is necessary to observe patterns of connection between countries. Two nations, Japan and China, connected since their infancy, continued to exert influence on each other into the modern era. In the early to mid 1900's, the intercession of the Japanese as an imperial force helped to shape the internal politics of China, and drive one faction, the Communists, to rise to power. The interconnected histories of the two nations then head in separate directions, with Japan following suit with Western democracy, and quickly rising to world power, while China is ravaged by famine, internal conflict and authoritarian rule. ●

# SOCIALISM: A MISNOMER

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by Jack

**D**uring the mid-19th century, in a time when industrial workers worked long hours for meager wages, socialist thought rightfully exploded across the western world. Many workers were enamored by a new economic theory in which the goal was to “secure for workers . . . the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of common ownership of the means of production” (Old Clause Four). While many people still view socialism favorably, they seem to have forgotten what it means. Today, those who support a progressive tax or tax funded welfare systems are called socialists, and even call themselves socialist. However, they are not socialists since they do not advocate “common ownership of the means of production.” Even Bernie Sanders called himself a democratic socialist, when in fact he is a social democrat, since he does not oppose private ownership yet advocates a progressive tax structure and a strong welfare state. Unfortunately, this misnomer blurs the line between liberals and socialists, and many right-wing thinkers and even some liberals themselves would have you believe that liberals and socialists are the same. Leftover attitudes from the Cold War, conservatives slandering liberals as socialist, and Bernie Sanders’

presidential campaign in which he incorrectly called himself a socialist led us to this misunderstanding. This serves the interests of the wealthy elites, who Adam Smith said are the “principal architects” of policy (Smith 841), by keeping the masses afraid of government ownership in order to maintain private ownership, while turning heads away from real socialism: worker’s ownership of production.

The overused definition of socialism meaning “total government control” most likely originates with the Red Scares and the long and lasting impressions of the Cold War. The Soviet Union followed the principles of Marxist-Leninism, which is the belief that communism is to be achieved by a strong, authoritarian, single-party socialist government, and that eventually the need for the authoritarian government would diminish, eventually giving way to a stateless, moneyless, classless society. The Marxist-Leninist Soviet government had universal control over industry, agriculture, trade, education, and healthcare, while also protecting itself by jailing, exiling or executing all internal threats to the soviet government. However, the Soviet experiment is itself a poor substitute for actual socialism. Rather than represent genuine socialist ownership and governance, some



economists, chiefly M.C. Howard and J.E. King, authors of “‘State Capitalism’ in the Soviet Union,” argued that the Soviet Union was “state capitalism” rather than socialism, since the government profited off of the workers rather than running industry and agriculture in the workers’ favor.

It was easy enough to demonstrate that wage labour had not been abolished in the Soviet Union, and that the proletariat had no more control over the allocation and use of the means of production than its counterpart in the West. It also seems clear that “the extraction of surplus labour and its appropriation by the minority which did control the means of production in the interests of accumulation — in short, their exploitation — was proceeding on an ever-increasing scale and (until the late 1960s) at what appeared to be an ever-increasing pace.” (Howard and King 119)

The fact that the Soviet Union, even though the ruthless ruling class was made up of bourgeois profiteers claiming to be socialist created a new definition of socialism. Prior to the Soviet Union and Marxist-Leninist theory, socialism was defined by worker ownership of the means of production. After the Soviet Union and Marxist-Leninist theory, socialism was also

defined as government ownership of the means of production. The failure of the Marxist-Leninist brand of socialism, or “state capitalist” government controlled economy, gives conservatives an excuse to slander and silence progressive liberals who would like to use government intervention within an economy to provide services such as education and healthcare by calling them “socialist.”

Many conservatives like to characterize socialism as total government control. For example, Christian Traditionalist website, “The Culture War,” describes socialism as 100% government control and 0% personal freedom, along with communism and fascism (Capitalism vs. Socialism). This is a common oversimplification that conservatives make when describing and slandering socialism. However, socialism has nothing to do with what government does. In fact, many socialists are libertarians who believe in as little government as possible, with many upholding expressly anarchist views. For example, in 1936, there was an anarchist-socialist revolution in Spain which survived for three years. An even more prescient example is the Rojava Revolution in Syrian Kurdistan that has been ongoing since 2012. Founded on libertarian socialist ideals, Rojava

has created a mixed economy with mostly worker ownership and some private ownership while operating with a decentralized government. In other words, socialism is being achieved at the local level by the workers themselves rather than by a centralized state. This Kurdish method of achieving socialism is known as Democratic Confederalism, coined by Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan. He explains that “The democratic confederalism of Kurdistan is not a state system, it is the democratic system of a people without a state” (‘Democratic Confederalism’). In other words, since the Kurdish people do not have a state to call their own, they build socialism upon libertarian principles without much help from any government. Both the Spanish Revolution and the ongoing Rojava Revolution prove that socialism does not require government control if the people are determined enough to build socialism upon libertarian principles.

American politics has successfully, and intentionally, blurred the lines between liberal and socialist. A liberal is someone who tends to believe that the rich should be taxed more in order to pay for services such as public education, welfare, and healthcare. However, most liberals still support an economy based on

capitalist principles; they just want to use a progressive tax structure to ensure that the whole population is provided for. On the other hand, a socialist is someone who advocates common ownership of the means of production. This means that the workers who work the machines, shops, and factories should own the machines, shops, and factories so that they receive the whole product of their labor instead of receiving a fraction of that product through wages while the employer takes the rest for himself and profits. Thus, a socialist is opposed to the concept of private property. So, while a socialist government may employ liberal principles such as taxing the rich more than others and using that tax money for public well-being, liberals aren’t socialist since they do not advocate an economy based on worker ownership of the means of production. There has been a misunderstanding between liberal and socialist for some time now. For example, during the 2008 presidential campaign, John McCain implied that Obama’s tax plan was secretly socialist by saying, “at least in Europe, the socialist leaders who so admire my opponent are upfront about their objectives” (McCain). It was clear that McCain knew that Obama was in fact not a socialist, because in an interview the next day he somewhat backtracked on his



on his statement, while not admitting he was wrong. However, moments like these create confusion among the public, because some people will believe this and dislike liberals for being “socialist,” and others who hold liberal views may embrace this and begin calling themselves “socialist.”

Despite this slandering of so-called “socialists,” 43% of Americans have a favorable view of socialism, while only 32% have a favorable view of capitalism (Rampell). Most of these young people are those who were taken in by Bernie Sanders and his talk of Democratic Socialism. These are young people who agree with Paul Krugman that we “should ignore all the propaganda about ‘job creators’ and demand that the super-elite pay substantially more in taxes” (Krugman). However, Bernie Sanders’ plan of taxing the rich more to pay for public services does not amount to socialism, since it does nothing to favor worker ownership of the means of production. So, while young people claim to view socialism favorably, many of them do not know what socialism is, and support Sanders-style tax reform and public services implemented within a capitalist economy. This is the most recent contributor to the misunderstanding of what socialism is, since

many people who found themselves agreeing with Bernie Sanders started calling themselves socialists, since Bernie himself incorrectly called himself a socialist.

The socialism misnomer actually serves the wealthy elites of capitalist society. It acts as a smoke screen, hiding the real socialism. While people are too busy arguing over Bernie’s “socialism,” and conservatives are fear-mongering about soviet-style “total government control,” capitalism continues to steamroll forward and hardly anyone stops to think about alternatives to either privatization or reliance on government. It creates an appeal to people’s “Idols of the Theatre,” which are biases instilled in the mind by “dogmas of philosophies” (Bacon). This appeal reinforces either their trust in privatization or in government, while blinding them from other ways of thinking, such as real socialism. ●





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